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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: MIDDLE EAST; IRAQ; NORTH KOREA

MIDDLE EAST

1. "The liberties taken by Israel's wall"
The leading Globe and Mail opined (8/8): "...U.S. opposition to the wall - not the right to build it, but the path it is taking - may have forced Israel to drop a plan to extend it about 30 kilometres into the West Bank to include the large Jewish settlement of Ariel. Nevertheless, the Bush administration is reportedly considering the imposition of limited economic sanctions against Israel for other incursions. It need not come to that. Israel should heed the concerns of the international community and adjust its plans for the wall, minimizing the seizure of Palestinian land and forgoing construction along the Jordan Valley. This would help build confidence between the two sides just as further strains are showing between Mr. Sharon and Mr. Abbas.... Israelis have an absolute right to be free of terror, but this should not come at the expense of Palestinian land."

IRAQ

2. "A league of self-deceit"
Under the sub-heading, "Arab states shouldn't criticize Iraq's fledgling democracy," the nationalist Ottawa Citizen commented (8/8): "...Rather than face up to their own responsibilities for what has gone wrong, too many Arab leaders prefer to fault others - imperialism, globalization, Americans, Jews - for the repressiveness, poverty and despair that characterizes much of the Arab world.... [W]ith Saddam gone, would the Arab League refuse to recognize a body that is the most representative Iraq has ever known? Could it be because Arab leaders fear that a 'successful' Iraqi experiment in democracy will expose their own illegitimacy? If the United States transforms Iraq into even a modestly democratic, constitutionally-ordered society, every Arab leader will face reformist pressures. It's as if the Arab League wants post-Saddam Iraq to fail in order to justify the continuance of their own authoritarian regimes.... In refusing to welcome Iraq's governing council, the Arab League has showed that many in the Arab elite continue to wander in the deserts of denial, maintaining their power and masking their failings by refusing to face the geo-political realities of today's Middle East."

NORTH KOREA

3. "Some reasons for hope on North Korea this time"
The left-of-center Vancouver Sun observed (8/6): "After insisting for nine months that it would engage only in bilateral talks with the United States - with no other country at the same table - North Korea agreed on the weekend to multilateral talks on the future of its nuclear weapons program. That's important because the Americans were just as stubbornly refusing to engage in the bilateral talks the North Koreans wanted. We don't know for sure what prompted North Korea to be the one to blink. Nonetheless, we applaud this diplomatic breakthrough for several reasons.... [I]t's a relief that North Korea has finally agreed to sit down with Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and the U.S. to figure out ways of dismantling its nuclear program in exchange for economic aid and assurances that it won't be attacked. But our optimism is tempered because Pyongyang isn't known as a government that keeps its word.... A White House spokesman acknowledges that there will be opportunities during the multilateral meetings for North Korea and the U.S. or any other party to talk directly to each other. Such a flexible attitude could go a long way towards convincing North Korea to give up its nuclear dreams. So while the Chinese and the Russians are twisting Mr. Kim's arm, Japan, South Korea - already a major donor of aid to the North - and the U.S. can and should be easing his discomfort by offering economic assistance. Enticements alone haven't worked, and neither has the threat of force. But offering the carrot and wielding the stick together have a much better chance of success."

